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Conference Paper

Indonesia-PNG Cooperation: Papua Strategic Roles

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Abstract

Indonesia and Papua New Guinea (PNG) have built a strong relation since 1986 under the Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship, and Cooperation. Both countries have agreed to promote economic and political goals. Economically, Indonesia and PNG share a strong commitment to boost economic development in numerous strategic fields; and politically, both countries strongly adopt the principle of non-interference and subscribe to the notion of territorial integrity. To secure the goals, Indonesia and PNG have signed a number of MoUs in wide range of areas both in soft cooperation such as capacity building for oil and energy exploration and hard cooperation to combat cross-border crimes, drug smuggling and terrorism. Addressing the cooperation between Indonesia and PNG is the key to understand the dynamics of West Papua ongoing struggle within Melanesia forums such as the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). Having said that, this essay specifically addresses two main points. First, it examines the political interests of Indonesia through cooperation with PNG and how this cooperation affects Papua status within Indonesia. Second, it discusses the strategic roles of Papua which shapes the cooperations. The essay argues that Indonesia uses the cooperation to secure its political goals to gain support from PNG and other Melanesian states to maintain its territorial integrity and to combat separatism and such cooperation is best understood in terms of Papua strategic roles for Indonesia.

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1. Introduction

Understanding Indonesia-Papua New Guinea (PNG) cooperation requires an understanding of Papua strategic roles within the Unitary State of Republic of Indonesia and dynamics of bilateral cooperation. The issues of Papua tend to dominate the talks between Indonesia and PNG in most bilateral meetings and agreements. The strategic roles of Papua undoubtedly shape political and economic cooperation between both countries. It would be definitely different if Papua is no longer part of Indonesia.

Indonesia and PNG formalised diplomatic ties rightly after PNG became an independent country on 16 September 1975. Since then, Indonesia started to build a strategic cooperation with PNG in wide range of areas: politics, economy, security, education and training and border management. The commitment of the cooperation has been materialized through various MoUs, signed treaties and joint committees which is made

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possible through intensive lobbies and official meetings. Both countries are committed to secure natural resources in the border and fight transnational crimes, notably weapons and drug smuggling and human trafficking, illegal border crossers and illegal logging. This commitment essentially drives Indonesia's policy to initiate a strategic cooperation with PNG.

In the light of the strategic partnership, this paper will address two key issues. First, it will examine the political interests of Indonesia under Indonesia-PNG cooperation. Second, it will discuss the strategic roles of Papua to show the principal reasons Indonesia defending Papua as part of Indonesia.

2. Indonesia's Political Interests

Keohane (1984) argues that cooperation is highly political because within cooperation, states will adjust and alter their behaviors to promote their interests. The Keohane's argument is relevant in the discussion of Indonesia-PNG cooperation. Central to Indonesia and PNG cooperation is the notion of mutual benefit. Indonesia is more interested in political gains while PNG economic gains are preferred.

In 2013, Indonesia and PNG launched a Plan of Action for the Implementation of Comprehensive Partnership. In the part of political cooperation specified in the Plan of Action, Indonesia and PNG agree to support each other's efforts to maintain national unity and territorial integrity and work closely to strengthen bilateral relations based on the spirit of mutual respect, friendship and cooperation (*Indonesia-PNG Plan of Action*). The political statement demonstrates that the territorial integrity of Indonesia should be respected and recognized by PNG and the principle of non-interference is enforced.

Indonesia's political interests advanced through cooperation with PNG are principally directed to defend its territorial integrity and to combat Papua Freedom Movement (OPM)'s insurgencies. The commitment of Indonesia to build a strong partnership with PNG as strategic efforts to defend Indonesia's territorial integrity has been a top priority policy since Papua became part of Indonesia and after PNG became an independent state. Interestingly, right after PNG achieving independence on 16 September 1975, both countries formalized diplomatic ties. During the period, Indonesia and PNG focused their cooperation on combating separatism and defending territorial integrity. In 1974, for example, Indonesia and Australia (acting for PNG) signed a treaty for border management. Indonesia's primary intention in the treaty is to combat Free Papua Movement (OPM) (Blaskett 1989:23). Indonesia considers OPM not only as a serious threat to Indonesia's territorial integrity but also to Indonesia's security.

Likewise, under the Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship, and Cooperation signed in Port Moresby, PNG, on 27 October 1986 Indonesia and PNG have agreed to, among others, recognize the territorial integrity of both countries and uphold principle of non-interference. Article 2 of the treaty uses the strong language that, "Each contracting party shall display and promote respect for the other country's : national independence,

sovereign equality, and territorial integrity;...;" and article 8 (2) affirms that, "The Contracting Parties shall each respect the other nation's right to be free from coercion, external interference in internal affairs, and subversion" (*Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship and Cooperation, Indonesia-PNG*). PNG also seriously specifies its policy of opposing any activities and campaign against Indonesia by OPM and does not support and recognize Papua's call for independence (*Papua New Guinea-Indonesia Bilateral Relations*). PNG is very clear in its policy that they will continue to support the unitary state of Indonesia.

At the PIF 19th summit held in Noumea, New Caledonia on 23 June 2013, MSG leaders maintain its support to the inalienable rights of West Papua for self-determination (*MSG 2013 Communique*). However, such statement should be understood as a legal and political right affirmation and not a political recognition of an independent state. In other words, the communique should be read as the acknowledgment of MSG members of West Papua's rights of self-determination as specified under the preamble of the MSG constitution and UN Charter. At the same time, MSG members particularly PNG and Fiji tend to refrain themselves from politically recognizing West Papua's rights to political independence. Similarly, the United States would subscribe to the notion of Palestine's rights of self-determination to be an independent state but would impose its vote power to prevent Palestine to be an independent state.

Indonesia eagerly combats OPM due to the fact that the border between Indonesia and PNG has been a sanctuary for OPM and its supporters to launch their activities. Also, border crossings have been frequently made by the OPM to hide, escape, and raise armed resistance against the Indonesian military. Numerous incidents and gun contacts between the Indonesian military and OPM have frequently taken place. Furthermore, defending its territorial integrity and combating OPM has become Indonesia's prioritized foreign policy; and PNG is the key partner to realize such policy.

Indonesia considers PNG as a key strategic partner, an important ally and key actor in Pacific countries and Melanesian country groups. Such recognition is evident. First, during the first official bilateral meeting between Indonesia foreign minister, H. E. Retno L. P. Marsudi, and the Foreign Minister of the Papua New Guinea, Hon. Rimbink Pato, in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea on 27 February 2015, Indonesia and PNG were committed to promote and strengthen comprehensive partnership based on mutual benefits and mutual respect on territorial integrity (*Pernyataan Bersama Indonesia-PNG*).

Second, Indonesia conducts its lobby more intensely with PNG than any other MSG members groups. Such effort demonstrates a recognition on the important role of PNG to support Indonesia's claim over Papua. Not only does PNG shares border with Indonesia but also they are a dominant player and founder of MSG. Interestingly, Papuans also acknowledges the central role of PNG and admits that PNG should receive more political attention in Papua international lobby and diplomacy because PNG is the closest and most intimate partner owned by Papua (Haluk 2015:22). Both Indonesia and Papua need PNG to advance their political interests. Indonesia are more interested in

gaining PNG support for territorial integrity; while Papua is seeking support for political independence.

To advance Indonesia political goals, Indonesia adopt cultural approach by claiming to share Melanesian cultures. In fact, Melanesian ethnic is not an exclusive entity in Indonesia but part of Indonesia historical heritage as number of its provinces belong to Melanesian ethnic groups. That said, the fear of disintegration pushes Indonesia to seek support through joining and establishing ethnic support groups. First, Indonesia believes that joining Melanesian groups is a right political approach. In fact, Indonesia has conducted intense lobbies and diplomacy to bring Indonesia closer within Melanesian country groups. This political move has been successful. In 2010 Indonesia submitted an application for the MSG membership and a year later in 2011 Indonesia won an observer status. Despite a strong opposition from Vanuatu, with the help from Fiji Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama, then Chairman of the MSG's Leader Summit, and the support of Sir Michael Somare, then Prime Minister of PNG, Indonesia's application for MSG membership was successful (Sally, 2015)

Surprisingly, on the 20th MSG Leaders Summit held in Honiara, Solomon Islands, 26 June 2015, Indonesia status was upgraded from an observer to an associate member while the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) granted a status as an observer. ULMWP is a new organization officially established on 6 December 2014 in Saralana, Vanuatu after three West Papua organizations: The West Papua National Coalition for Liberation (WPNCL), the State Federal Republic of West Papua (NFRPB) and the National Parliament of West Papua (PNWP) have agreed to form a single organization to conduct international lobby and diplomacy. The establishment of single organization to advocate Papua issue is the condition agreed upon by MSG members on their summit held in Port Moresby, PNG on 26 June 2014 that the West Papua application for the MSG membership can be accommodated once various Papua organizations are united under a single organization. The request of MSG member was then responded by West Papuan leaders by establishing ULMWP to promote West Papua's political right to self-determination that aims towards political independence and a fully recognized sovereign state. According to the MSG Communique, Indonesia represents five Melanesian provinces (NTT, Maluku, Maluku Utara, West Papua and Papua) while ULMWP represents Melanesians living abroad (MSG 2015 Communique).

Another cultural approach by Indonesia to promote its political interest is by forming the Indonesian Melanesian Brotherhood in Ambon on 7 October 2015. Despite his absence during the declaration and later claimed that the declaration is a merely politically driven agenda (Jubi 2015), the governor of Papua approved the declaration by giving mandate to the Regional Secretary Constan Karma, to sign it (Jubi 2015). Further, on 26-30 October Indonesia hosted for the first time the Melanesian Cultural Festival with the goal to build common understanding of Melanesian cultures and to promote cooperation. Incorporating Papua into Indonesia and conducting a lobby to be part of MSG indicates a political and cultural construction as the national hymn "Sabang sam-pai Merauke" and national slogan "*Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity)" only makes sense with the inclusion of Papua under the unitary state of Republic of Indonesia.

3. Papua's Strategic Roles for Indonesia

Papua is politically strategic for Indonesia. Indonesia has consistently claimed that Papua is legally and politically inseparable part of Indonesia. The slogan of NKRI Harga Mati (literally translated Unitary States of the Republic of Indonesia: Price of Death) has been used by Indonesia publicly both in written documents and official oral statements to show that Papua can not be taken away from Indonesia territory and must be defended at any cost. Under the New York Agreement of 1962, the Act of Free Choice was held in 1969 for people of Papua to vote for Indonesia. Despite Indonesia's legal claim over Papua's territory, the majority of Papuans perceives the 1969 plebiscite as a mocked election and constitute an egregious violation of fundamental right to self-determination recognized under the international law. Papuans claim that it was not the act of free choice but the act of no choice because it was conducted under severe military intimidation and threat (as cited in Tadjoeddin, 2014, p.45; Tebay, 2005, p.7; Crocombe, 2007, p.284).

Papua is politically strategic for Indonesia for several reasons. First, Papua has a powerful political bargaining. The integration of Papua into Indonesia constitutes an important historical and political process. During the Cold War, both the US and Soviet Union had a powerful influence on Indonesia. When Indonesia offered bid to the US for modern weaponry and training, US refused the bid due to its ties to Holland. Under NATO treaty, the US did not aid Indonesia which potentially forced Dutch out of Papua. Fearing that the Soviet would provide weapons to Indonesia and impose its communism on Indonesia, US finally shifted the policy to favor Indonesia's interests (as cited in Mortimer, 2006, pp.187-189).

Second, political image-building. The image of Indonesia has been negative over the handling of Papua. Repeated human rights violations, brutal military operations, a low level of development, marginalization, and rampant poverty has led to Indonesia's negative image in the international community. In their research for the Papua Road Map LIPI has identified four key issues causing the problems in Papua: (1) marginalization and discrimination against indigenous Papuans; (2) the failure of development; (3) the contradictory perception between Jakarta and Papua over history of integration and political identity; (4) accountability of past state violence (LIPI 2008).

To repair Indonesia's image, Indonesia takes strategic steps to develop Papua, empower Papuans and minimize military approach with prosperity approach through special autonomy. The introduction of special autonomy law No. 21/2001 is to show that Indonesia is committed to promote development in Papua and solve the issue of human rights violations. Three key words under special autonomy: affirmation, empowerment and protection is a common expression of the Indonesia development based policy. Also, one of the mandates under special autonomy law is establishing Human Rights Tribunal and Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR). Although these two Human Rights bodies are yet to be established due to lack of Indonesia's political will, Indonesia tries to show its commitment to human rights protection under the law.

Third, construction of political and cultural identity. The hymn "Dari Sabang-Merauke (from Sabang to Merauke) is not only a cultural symbol of identity that Indonesia's territory covers the area from Sabang to Merauke but also a political construction. King, Chauvel, and Fernandes notes that, " the incorporation of West Papua into Indonesia is a political construct (Kalidjernih, 2008 pp. 77-78)."Likewise, Tamagola, sociologist from University of Indonesia, points out that Indonesia is a political concept and Nusantara as part of the concept of racial and ethnic diversities (Tabloid Jubi, November 2, 2015). During the early years, Indonesia is more interested in political integrity. For example, on 1 December 1963, Indonesia supported a consultation held by representative of Papua in Kotabaru (now Jayapura) and one of the statements issued is that "West Irian is a part of Unitary State of Republic of Indonesia covering an area from Sabang to Merauke" (Djopari 1995:72).The integration of Papua into Indonesia has been considered by Indonesian elites as politically correct.

Not only does Indonesia's claim political correctness but also cultural correctness. This means that political integration isto advance Indonesia's cultural multiethnic principle of Bhineka Tunggal Ika. According to Wiener, integration means integration of nation, of territory, of values, of elite-mass and of behavior. Integration of Papua is, therefore, not only an integration of nations and territory to politically cover Sabang-Merauke but also integration of common values and shared cultural diversity under Bhineka Tunggal Ika.

4. Conclusion

The paper has discussed how Indonesia political interests are pursued through cooperation with PNG. Although the theme of cooperation have undergone an expansion from hard cooperation to soft cooperation, Indonesia's main politicalgoals of building cooperation are to gain support from PNG to defend Indonesia's territorial integrity and combat OPM. Successfully, Indonesia and PNG have signed Treaty of Mutual Respect, Friendship, and Cooperation in 1986 in which both countries commit to respect territorial integrity,national independence, sovereign equality and agree to adopt principle of non-interference. To advance its political interests, Indonesia adopts cultural approach by applying for the MSG membership, establishing Melanesian's Brotherhood and hosting a Melanesian cultural festival. Indonesia's interests in defending Papua part of Indonesia based on the notion that Papua has powerful political bargaining. Aslo, the inclusion of Papua is as a means of political image building and the symbol of political and cultural construction of Bhineka Tunggal Ika.

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